

Pathfinder on Digital Preservation in Academic Libraries

Kristin “Krissa” Stewart

University of Southern California

## **I. Introduction:**

Digital preservation is a relatively new area of focus within Library Science. Appearing as the internet and technology in general improved at impressive speeds, it is now an activity in which many academic and specialty libraries participate. To put it simply, digital preservation is the process of transferring pieces of media of all types into digital formats. Those digital copies are then stored in easily accessible databases and can even be set up to search for keywords in individual texts. To be able to implement digital preservation in a useful manner, libraries need to not only understand what it is, but also be able to examine the ethics of digital preservation and how to implement it with respect for our collections. The aim of this document is to provide sources that will not only explain digital preservation, but to provide sources that explore the ethics of this new form of collections.

## **II. Keywords:**

As we begin to search any subject, the first thing we lean on is keywords. It is entirely likely that the first thing we will type into our search bars are the subject itself. Keywords are how we begin our research, they are the jumping off points. These words are the first way to get sources and our sources can then be narrowed down and specified. Below are some keywords to get you started on the subject of digital preservation.

*Keywords: Digital Preservation, digitalization, digitization of archival materials, preservation ethics, digitization ethics, digital libraries, academic libraries.*

## **III. Subject Headings:**

Subject headings are one of the ways the Library of Congress organizes their collections and has been applied in libraries throughout the United States. These headings deal with subject matter

and there are hundreds to sort through, but by looking at a specific heading, one can find many related pieces of media. Below are some subject heading pertaining to digital preservation.

*Subject Headings: Digital preservation, digitization, Library materials -- Conservation and restoration, Archival materials-Digitization.*

#### **IV. Databases:**

Databases are central to any sort of research. These are the places we go to find sources; some are exceptionally large and broad; others are small and specialized. There are some similarities in all databases that make them databases, namely that they are searchable, electronic catalogs where one can retrieve published works. The differences come down to subject matter and licensing mostly, meaning it is often useful to look at multiple databases when looking into sources for your research. Below are several databases where information on digital preservation can be found.

##### **EBSCOhost**

EBSCOhost is a broad academic database that includes journal articles and books pertaining to many different subject matters. It is one of the databases that many college students turn to first. When one types “Digital Preservation” into the search bar, 6,024 results are returned. While this certainly needs to be narrowed down to be used well, it is clear that EBSCOhost provides a wealth of knowledge pertaining to the subject. By using different keywords and subject headings, one is highly likely to find something relevant.

### ProQuest

ProQuest is perhaps an even larger database. Putting “digital preservation” into their search bar results in an insane 435,359 results. With this many results, it is even more likely that you can find what you are looking for within its catalog. While the larger databases are invaluable resources, one does have to put in a bit of extra work to find what they are looking for. If you choose to use ProQuest, be prepared to narrow your search significantly.

### Gale Information Science and Library Issues Collection

Gale Information Science and Library Issues Collection is a database that specifically includes articles published in journals relating to all information professionals, including those aimed at librarians. Typing “digital preservation” into their search bar produces far fewer result, a mere 421. What allows this database to stand out though is that it only includes thing published in library and information journals. These will be articles written by professionals in the field and will relate to the topic at hand directly.

### Emerald

Emerald is also a specified database, looking directly into library science. It is also a smaller database. Entering “digital preservation” into their search box comes up with about 5,000 results. It is the specificity that makes this database appealing away. It is quite easy to narrow down, with clear selections to choose, but you will find sources in the relevant field.

## **V. Books and Book Chapters:**

Below, are books that deal directly with digital preservation as it pertains to libraries. Books provide an excellent framework to the process and standards of preserving thing digitally. Books are not only longer than any other type of media, they also have the ability to delve much deeper into the subject matter provided. While articles are fast to read, the in-depth nature of books makes them an extremely valuable resource for any researcher.

Brown, A. (2014). *Practical digital preservation: A how-to guide for organizations of any size*. In Practical Digital Preservation. Facet Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.29085/9781856049627>

This book is essentially the beginners guide to understanding and implementing digital preservation within one's organization. It is written for the layman, assuming a basic understanding of IT rather than an expert level. More than anything, this book seeks to make digital preservation seem straightforward. With a large influx of recent information regarding digital preservation, having a straightforward encompassing guide is very welcome.

Cox, A. (2004). *Digital preservation in libraries. Part 2*. Emerald Group.

This book addresses the formats in which digital collections are handled. There are many different formats that are being use daily and choosing the correct one for your organization and each piece of media. This book discusses less theory and more practice than the others, which is important to understanding the actual application of digital preservations in libraries and it is currently practiced.

Owens, T. (2018). *The ~~t~~Theory and ~~c~~Craft of ~~d~~Digital ~~p~~Preservation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

This book looks into the public perception of what is stored on the internet and how it is accessed and stored. It examines the theory of preserving media digitally. The book suggests that we need to follow a simple straightforward path to do so, one that is mostly standardized between organizations for ease of use. The author also theorizes that this will quickly become a majorly collaborative task, one that will need to involve many different disciplines to complete properly.

## **VI. Journal Articles:**

Journal articles are much shorter than books but also far more focused. What is more the articles below have all been published in scholarly journals. This means that they are all peer reviewed. With this in mind we can be sure that they are accurate and true to the knowledge of the time. They give examples of digital preservation in action within libraries running today, looking at them critically to see how well the process works and how it can improve.

Conway, P. (2010). Preservation in the age of google: Digitization, digital preservation, and dilemmas. *The Library Quarterly (Chicago)*, 80(1), 61–79.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/648463>

This article does not look at libraries specifically, but at the larger world of artifact and media conservation. By comparing the process of official preservation with the search engine Google, it looks at how historical societies choose what needs to be preserved and in what order they are preserved. It also looks into the gaps that current exist in the technology organizations have as well as the gaps in training that needs to be addressed.

Fisher, K. (2017). Barriers to digital preservation in special collections departments.

*Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture*, 45(4), 180–185.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/pdte-2016-0027>

This essay is an informative essay exploring the difficulties in digitally preserving the collections from Special Collections Departments, specifically looking at the Special Collections Department in the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s. This article examines the barriers the University of Hawai‘i is experiencing, which come out in three main ways. The first being workflow and procedural obstacles, looking at things from an administrative side, the second being resource limitations, looking at both technology and personal limitations, and the third being a lack of buy-ins, looking at how a lack of awareness can harm a program.

Ross, S. (2012). Digital preservation, archival science and methodological foundations for digital libraries. *New Review of Information Networking*, 17(1), 43–68.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13614576.2012.679446>

This article looks at how digital preservation intersects with digital libraries. As digital libraries continue to grow in commonality, this will be an important intersection to understand. It also speaks at length about how new the theories surrounding digital preservation is. We need to keep in mind just how new this system is when applying it to our own libraries. As we continue to increase the presence of digital libraries, we need to ensure the collections preserved in them remain sustainable, authentic, accessible and understandable over time.

Veve, M. (2018). Best Practices in Digital Preservation. A Report of the ALCTS PARS Digital Preservation Interest Group Meeting. American Library Association Annual Conference,

Chicago, June 2017. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 35(2), 209–212.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07317131.2018.1425328>

This article is a survey that was done with the various members of the Digital Preservation Interest Group, hoping to look at the challenges and successes members had in digitizing their own collections and the best ways to move forward with digital preservation in the future. It discovered that many libraries struggled with collaboration with both various library departments, as well as outside organizations. The other major issue that was run into was trying to figure out what was needed to be preserved and what could be left for later or kept in physical form without preservation.

## **VII. Internet Sources:**

While internet sources should not be our only source of information while researching, they are a good place to start out or gain background information. They are quick and easy to find, a simple keyword search can bring up the basic information you need to start or even websites from trusted government or educational sources that speak directly about your topic.

Digital Preservation (Library of Congress)

<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/>

This website directly speaks about the official process of digital preservation within the Library of Congress. It includes the current projects and processes happening, meeting that are open to the public regarding digital preservation, and the Library of Congress's current strategies for preserving their collection digitally.



## Why digital preservation matters

<https://www.dpconline.org/handbook/digital-preservation/why-digital-preservation-matters>

This is an article written by the Digital Preservation Coalition, an organization dedicated exclusively to the digital preservation of media, the ethics behind it, and its processes. This article specifically speaks about why it is important for us to preserve things. It addresses a few of the issues, but mostly in how those issues relate to its importance. That importance all comes down to the changing way we view information, namely that more and more, we view things on our devices rather than with physical books.

## Introduction to Digital Preservation: What is Digital Preservation?

<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitalpreservation/whatisdp>

This page is a guide made by the University of Oxford directly addressing the question of “What is Digital Preservation?” This is a very straightforward and simple introduction to the bare basics and a good place for research to begin. The page speaks about the methods, models, and standards currently in place within different libraries. There is even a section addressing further reading one can do. It also touches on related fields, like digital archiving or digital curating.